

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

SIGHTINGS OF LONG-TOED STINTS *CALIDRIS SUBMINUTA* AT NAIVASHA

Long-toed Stints *Calidris subminuta* were netted on three occasions in the rift valley (at Naivasha and Nakuru) between 1969 and 1974 (Backhurst & Britton 1969, EANHS OS-C 1977, Britton 1980). During the past two years there have been further sight records from Dandora, Malindi and Naivasha (East African Bird Reports for 1984 and 1985 in press). Since no local account of the field characters of this rare but apparently regular visitor to Kenya has appeared, it seems worth giving details of birds which I found at Naivasha early in 1985.

Late on 2 March 1985 I flushed a stint from drying soft mud on the SE shore of Lake Naivasha about 1 km north of Safariland Club. It was dark brown above with a noticeable broad blackish rump centre, and drew attention with a short but rather loud call, a single *churrrp* not unlike that of a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* but more abrupt. It disappeared behind a bank of papyrus with a curious wavering flight, and could not be found again. About midday on 20 March, at precisely the same place, I noted a browner stint associating loosely with a party of feeding Little Stints *C. minuta*. I observed it through binoculars in good light at 15-20 m and was able to see details of plumage, head and bill shape, and leg colour. Although fairly tame, it twice took to the wing, but was easily relocated. When flushed it gave the same short call and showed the same erratic flight and prominent dark rump as the bird seen three weeks earlier, which I presumed to have been the same individual. An inconspicuous short wingbar and pale (but not white) outer tail were noted. On one occasion it rose quite high before flying about and eventually landing only 100 m away. I identified the bird as a Long-toed Stint in winter plumage. Details noted whilst it was feeding were as follows: slightly smaller than accompanying winter plumage Little Stints, head apparently smaller, neck relatively longer and general build less compact; upperparts darker and browner than Little Stint, these and wing coverts more heavily mottled; top of head dark from forehead to nape; dark mark through eye, contrasting with quite prominent pale supercilium, which extended well back (Little Stints had paler, less distinct head marking and were broadly whitish on forehead); bill appeared marginally finer and longer than in Little Stint, with a suggestion of a downward droop at the tip; fine streaking was quite noticeable across the breast; the legs were pale brownish, and long toes were in fact obvious when the bird lifted its feet; feeding action was similar to that of Little Stint, but carriage more crouched-looking, legs rather more flexed.

I found another unusual stint on the northern shore of Lake Naivasha on 1 May. With the lake level rising fast and sedge growth beginning, a few hundred migrant waders (mainly Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*, Curlew Sandpipers and Little Stints) were concentrated in a single marshy area. The bird was flushed at a few metres range showing rich dark brown mottled upperparts, a broad dark rump and a

short wingbar. It gave the distinctive *churp* call familiar from experience with the March bird. It was flushed three more times from low marshy vegetation, but could not be seen on the ground. Each time it called and towered, then flew around high and rather erratically for a minute or two before landing. It did not associate at all with the other waders in the area. Although head details and leg colour were not seen I have no doubt that this was also a Long-toed Stint. At the time concerned, the March site some 10 km away was flooded and devoid of waders. This later sighting could easily therefore have involved the original bird.

REFERENCES

- BACKHURST, G.C. & BRITTON, P.L. 1969. A record of *Calidris subminuta* from Kenya. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 89: 121.
- EANHS OS-C 1977. Some recent records of Palaearctic Birds in Kenya and Tanzania. *Scopus* 1: 39-43.

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RED-NECKED PHALAROPES *PHALAROPUS LOBATUS* OFF THE COAST
OF SOMALIA AND KENYA

This communication reports sightings of Red-necked Phalaropes made by my friend Nautical Officer F. Scharffetter during voyages along the Somali and Kenyan coasts in 1983 and 1985. Mr Scharffetter was a member of the crew during these voyages and is an experienced bird-watcher. His observations of phalaropes are listed below: the first number given refers to the location of the sighting(s) as shown on the map (Fig. 1); the numbers after the date are the numbers of phalaropes.

Southbound

1. 5 Nov 1983: 4 + 3 + 2 + 1
2. 6 Nov 1983: 06:00: 5 + 2 + 10 + 6 + 12 + 10
3. 6 Nov 1983: 08:00: few hundred on current edge
4. 6 Nov 1983: 16:00: 10
5. 6 Nov 1983: 17:00: 30
6. 8 Nov 1983: 4 + 3 + 16
7. 9 Nov 1983: 25 + 2 + 2 + 2 (water depth 140 m)
8. 10 Nov 1983: 4 (depth 80 m)
9. 10 Nov 1983: 35

Northbound

10. 15 Nov 1983: 12 + 1 (depth 1100 m)
11. 16 Nov 1983: 10
12. 16 Nov 1983: 9
13. 16 Nov 1983: 11:00: 1 (depth 180 m)
14. 16 Nov 1983: 16:00: 3000-5000
15. 17 Nov 1983: 16:00-17:00: about 3000 mostly in flocks of up to 300.